

What is claimed is:

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1. An interactive television program guide system comprising:
 - a program guide data source for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and
 - an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment, wherein the interactive television program guide is configured to display on the user television equipment a program listings screen having a plurality of program listings and a separator embedded within the program listings, wherein the separator visually separates the program listings into two regions each of which is associated with a different time slot, and wherein the separator contains information associated with one of the time slots.
 2. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the information associated with one of the time slots includes the start time of the time slot.
 3. The system defined in claim 2 wherein the program guide is configured to display the separator only when there are programs starting at least near the start time contained within the separator.
 4. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide is further configured to:
 - provide a user with an opportunity to navigate within the plurality of program listings while

indicating to the user a program listing that the user has navigated to; and

to skip the separator when the user navigates through the plurality of program listings.

5. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide is further configured to:

provide a user with an opportunity to navigate within the plurality of program listings while indicating to the user a program listing that the user has navigated to; and

require that the user navigate through an advertisement banner.

6. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide is further configured to display a time indicator that is displayed according to the time slot for a listing that the user is navigating through.

7. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

a program guide data source for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment, wherein the interactive television program guide is configured to:

display on the user television equipment a program guide display screen having an on-screen arrow that indicates to a user an available action; and

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is further configured to change the display

system comprising:

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equipment having user television equipment, wherein the

11. The system defined in claim 10 wherein the interactive television program guide is further configured to provide a user with an opportunity to

access the display screen displaying the local information data from a main menu that indicates a type of local information based on the local information data.

12. The system defined in claim 10 wherein the local information data is local weather information data.

13. The system defined in claim 10 wherein the local information data is local sports information data.

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14. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

a program guide data source for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment, wherein the interactive television program guide is configured to provide a user with an opportunity to configure the program guide to auto-tune channels when the user indicates a desire to change channels.

15. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

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a program guide data source for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide

equipment having user television equipment, wherein the interactive television program guide is configured to:

provide a user with an opportunity to search through the program listings while the interactive television program guide displays at least a first portion of the program listings in a display screen on the user television equipment; and

to display at least a second portion of the program listings in a display screen on the user television equipment when the user indicates using the user television equipment that the user is finished searching through the program listings, wherein the first display screen includes fewer program listings than the second display screen.

16. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

a program guide data source for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment, wherein the interactive television program guide is configured to:

display on the user television equipment at least a portion of the program listings in a display screen wherein program listings for similar titles are represented only once in the display screen; and

provide a user with an opportunity to search through the program listings in the display screen.

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a program guide data source for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

(provide) a user with an opportunity to set a duration for the interactive television program guide to display a FLIP overlay; and

18. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

a program guide data source for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment, wherein the interactive television program guide is configured to:

200 display a FLIP overlay on the user television equipment after a user indicates a desire to change channels; and

to remove the FLIP overlay from display on the user television equipment after a predefined time by sliding the FLIP overlay toward the bottom of the display until the entire FLIP overlay is no longer displayed.

Fig 105

19. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

a main facility having a program guide data source for providing program guide data comprising program listings;

interactive television program guide equipment on which an interactive television program guide is implemented, the interactive television program guide equipment comprising:

a television distribution facility;

and

user television equipment; and

wherein:

the main facility is configured to turn-off the program guide; and

the interactive television program guide is configured to display an overlay indicating that the interactive television program guide has been turned-off by the main facility.

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20. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

a program guide data source for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment, wherein the interactive television program guide is configured to:

provide a user with an opportunity to view channel information from a favorites program guide display screen; and

03 provide a user with an opportunity to set a television channel as a favorite based on the channel information.

21. A hybrid passive-interactive television program guide system comprising:

a main facility configured to provide a plurality of promotional videos and to schedule a first subset of the promotional videos for distribution according to a promotional philosophy;

a television distribution facility having a plurality of associated users, wherein the television distribution facility is configured to receive the plurality of promotional videos and to (1) distribute the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos to a plurality of users over a dedicated television channel, and (2) to distribute a second subset of the plurality of promotional videos to the plurality of users over a dedicated television channel instead of the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos when the second subset of the plurality of promotional videos is more suitable for the associated users than the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos as defined by the promotional philosophy; and

user television equipment configured to simultaneously display an interactive television program guide with the second subset of the plurality of promotional videos when the second subset of the plurality of promotional videos is more suitable for the associated users than the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos as defined by the promotional philosophy.

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22. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

displaying with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment a program listings screen having a plurality of program listings and a separator embedded within the program listings, wherein the separator visually separates the program listings into two regions each of which is associated with a different time slot, and wherein the separator contains information associated with one of the time slots.

23. The method defined in claim 22 wherein the step of displaying a program listings screen comprises displaying a program listings screen having a plurality of program listings and a separator embedded within the program listings, wherein the separator visually separates the program listings into two regions each of which is associated with a different time slot, and wherein the separator contains the start time of one of the time slots.

24. The method defined in claim 22 wherein the step of displaying a program listings screen comprises displaying a program listings screen having a plurality of program listings and a separator embedded within the program listings, wherein the separator visually separates the program listings into two

regions each of which is associated with a different time slot, and wherein the separator is displayed only when there are programs starting at least near the start time contained within the separator.

25. The method defined in claim 22 further comprising the steps of:

providing a user with an opportunity to navigate within the plurality of program listings while indicating to the user a program listing that the user has navigated to using the interactive television program guide; and

skipping the separator when the user navigates through the plurality of program listings using the interactive television program guide.

26. The method defined in claim 22 further comprising the steps of:

providing a user with an opportunity to navigate within the plurality of program listings while indicating to the user a program listing that the user has navigated to using the interactive television program guide; and

requiring with the interactive television program guide that the user navigate through an advertisement banner.

27. The method defined in claim 22 further comprising the step of displaying with the interactive television program guide a time indicator that is displayed according to the time slot for a listing that the user is navigating through.

28. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing program guide data comprising program listings;

displaying with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment a program guide display screen having an on-screen arrow that indicates to a user an available action; and

changing a display characteristic of the on-screen arrow with the interactive television program guide in response to the user performing the available action.

29. The method defined in claim 28 wherein the step of changing a display characteristic of the on-screen arrow with the interactive television program guide comprises changing the display characteristic of the on-screen arrow by highlighting the on-screen arrow in response to the user performing the available action.

30. The method defined in claim 28 wherein:
the on-screen arrow has a color; and
the step of changing a display characteristic of the on-screen arrow with the interactive television program guide comprises changing the display characteristic of the on-screen arrow by changing the color of the on-screen arrow in response to the user performing the available action.

31. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

displaying with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment the local information data in a display screen that is configurable based on the local information data.

32. The method defined in claim 31 further comprising the step of providing a user with an opportunity to access the display screen displaying the local information data from a main menu that indicates a type of local information based on the local information data.

33. The method defined in claim 31 wherein the step of displaying the local information data in a display screen that is configurable based on the local information data comprises displaying local weather information in a display screen that is configurable based on the local weather information.

34. The method defined in claim 31 wherein the step of displaying the local information data in a display screen that is configurable based on the local information data comprises displaying local sports information in a display screen that is configurable based on the local sports information.

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35. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing program guide data comprising program listings;

providing a user with an opportunity to configure an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment to auto-tune channels when the user indicates a desire to change channels; and

displaying at least a portion of the program listings with the interactive television program guide on the user television equipment in a program guide display screen.

36. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising:

providing program guide data comprising program listings;

providing a user with an opportunity to search through the program listings with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment while the interactive television program guide displays at least a first portion of the program listings in a display screen on the user television equipment; and

displaying at least a second portion of the program listings in a display screen on the user television equipment with the interactive television program guide when the user indicates using the user television equipment that the user is finished

searching through the program listings, wherein the first display screen includes fewer program listings than the second display screen.

37. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing program guide data comprising program listings;

displaying with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment at least a portion of the program listings in a display screen wherein program listings for similar titles are represented only once in the display screen; and

providing a user with an opportunity to search through the program listings with the interactive television program guide in the display screen.

38. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing program guide data comprising program listings;

providing a user with an opportunity to set a duration for the interactive television program guide to display a FLIP overlay, wherein the interactive television program guide is implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment; and

displaying the FLIP overlay for the duration set by the user with the interactive television program guide on the user television equipment.

39. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing program guide data comprising program listings;

displaying a FLIP overlay with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment after a user indicates a desire to change channels; and

removing the FLIP overlay from display on the user television equipment with the interactive television program guide after a predefined time by sliding the FLIP overlay toward the bottom of the display until the entire FLIP overlay is no longer displayed.

40. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing program guide data comprising program listings from a main facility to interactive television program guide equipment on which an interactive television program guide is implemented;

turning-off the interactive television program guide from the main facility; and

displaying on the user television equipment with the interactive television program guide an overlay indicating that the interactive television program guide has been turned-off with the main facility.

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41. A method for use in an interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing program guide data comprising program listings;

providing a user with an opportunity to view channel information from a favorites program guide display screen with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment, wherein the favorites program guide display screen is displayed on the user television equipment; and

providing a user with an opportunity to set a television channel as a favorite based on the channel information with the interactive television program guide.

42. A method for use in a hybrid passive-interactive television program guide system comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of promotional videos;

scheduling a first subset of the promotional videos for distribution by a main facility according to a promotional philosophy;

receiving the plurality of promotional videos at a television distribution facility;

distributing the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos from the television distribution facility to a plurality of users over a dedicated television channel;


distributing a second subset of the plurality of promotional videos from the television distribution facility to the plurality of users over a dedicated television channel instead of the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos when the second subset of the plurality of promotional videos is more suitable for the associated users than the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos as defined by the promotional philosophy; and

simultaneously displaying an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment with the second subset of the plurality of promotional videos when the second subset of the plurality of promotional videos is more suitable for the associated users than the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos as defined by the promotional philosophy.

48. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

means for displaying with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment a program listings screen having a plurality of program listings and a separator embedded within the program

 listings, wherein the separator visually separates the program listings into two regions each of which is associated with a different time slot, and wherein the separator contains information associated with one of the time slots.

44. The system defined in claim 43 wherein the means for displaying a program listings screen comprises means for displaying a program listings screen having a plurality of program listings and a separator embedded within the program listings, wherein the separator visually separates the program listings into two regions each of which is associated with a different time slot, and wherein the separator contains the start time of one of the time slots.

45. The system defined in claim 43 wherein the means for displaying a program listings screen comprises means for displaying a program listings screen having a plurality of program listings and a separator embedded within the program listings, wherein the separator visually separates the program listings into two regions each of which is associated with a different time slot, and wherein the separator is displayed only when there are programs starting at least near the start time contained within the separator.

46. The system defined in claim 43 further comprising:

means for providing a user with an opportunity to navigate within the plurality of program listings while indicating to the user a program listing

that the user has navigated to using the interactive television program guide; and

means for skipping the separator when the user navigates through the plurality of program listings using the interactive television program guide.

47. The system defined in claim 43 further comprising:

means for providing a user with an opportunity to navigate within the plurality of program listings while indicating to the user a program listing that the user has navigated to using the interactive television program guide; and

means for requiring with the interactive television program guide that the user navigate through an advertisement banner.

48. The system defined in claim 43 further comprising the means for displaying with the interactive television program guide a time indicator that is displayed according to the time slot for a listing that the user is navigating through.

49. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

means for displaying with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment a

program guide display screen having an on-screen arrow that indicates to a user an available action; and
means for changing a display characteristic of the on-screen arrow with the interactive television program guide in response to the user performing the available action.

50. The system defined in claim 49 wherein the means for changing a display characteristic of the on-screen arrow with the interactive television program guide comprises means for changing the display characteristic of the on-screen arrow by highlighting the on-screen arrow in response to the user performing the available action.

51. The system defined in claim 49 wherein:
the on-screen arrow has a color; and
the means for changing a display characteristic of the on-screen arrow with the interactive television program guide comprises means for changing the display characteristic of the on-screen arrow by changing the color of the on-screen arrow in response to the user performing the available action.

52. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings; and

means for displaying with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment

the local information data in a display screen that is configurable based on the local information data.

53. The system defined in claim 52 further comprising the means for providing a user with an opportunity to access the display screen displaying the local information data from a main menu that indicates a type of local information based on the local information data.

54. The system defined in claim 52 wherein the means for displaying the local information data in a display screen that is configurable based on the local information data comprises means for displaying local weather information in a display screen that is configurable based on the local weather information.

55. The system defined in claim 52 wherein the means for displaying the local information data in a display screen that is configurable based on the local information data comprises means for displaying local sports information in a display screen that is configurable based on the local sports information.

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C8 56. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings;

means for providing a user with an opportunity to configure an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television

equipment to auto-tune channels when the user indicates a desire to change channels; and

CP means for displaying at least a portion of the program listings with the interactive television program guide on the user television equipment in a program guide display screen.

57. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings;

means for providing a user with an opportunity to search through the program listings with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment while the interactive television program guide displays at least a first portion of the program listings in a display screen on the user television equipment; and

means for displaying at least a second portion of the program listings in a display screen on the user television equipment with the interactive television program guide when the user indicates using the user television equipment that the user is finished searching through the program listings, wherein the first display screen includes fewer program listings than the second display screen.

Sub B3 58. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings;

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means for displaying with an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment at least a portion of the program listings in a display screen wherein program listings for similar titles are represented only once in the display screen; and

means for providing a user with an opportunity to search through the program listings with the interactive television program guide in the display screen.

59. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings;

means for providing a user with an opportunity to set a duration for the interactive television program guide to display a FLIP overlay, wherein the interactive television program guide is implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment; and

means for displaying the FLIP overlay for the duration set by the user with the interactive television program guide on the user television equipment.

60. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings;

means for displaying a FLIP overlay with an interactive television program guide implemented on

interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment on the user television equipment after a user indicates a desire to change channels; and

means for removing the FLIP overlay from display on the user television equipment with the interactive television program guide after a predefined time by sliding the FLIP overlay toward the bottom of the display until the entire FLIP overlay is no longer displayed.

61. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings from a main facility to interactive television program guide equipment on which an interactive television program guide is implemented;

means for turning-off the interactive television program guide from the main facility; and

means for displaying on the user television equipment with the interactive television program guide an overlay indicating that the interactive television program guide has been turned-off with the main facility.

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C9~~ 62. An interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing program guide data comprising program listings;

means for providing a user with an opportunity to view channel information from a favorites program guide display screen with an interactive television program guide implemented on

interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment, wherein the favorites program guide display screen is displayed on the user television equipment; and

means for providing a user with an opportunity to set a television channel as a favorite based on the channel information with the interactive television program guide.

63. A hybrid passive-interactive television program guide system comprising:

means for providing a plurality of promotional videos;

means for scheduling a first subset of the promotional videos for distribution by a main facility according to a promotional philosophy;

means for receiving the plurality of promotional videos at a television distribution facility;

means for distributing the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos from the television distribution facility to a plurality of users over a dedicated television channel;

means for distributing a second subset of the plurality of promotional videos from the television distribution facility to the plurality of users over a dedicated television channel instead of the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos when the second subset of the plurality of promotional videos is more suitable for the associated users than the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos as defined by the promotional philosophy; and

means for simultaneously displaying an interactive television program guide implemented on interactive television program guide equipment having user television equipment with the second subset of the plurality of promotional videos when the second subset of the plurality of promotional videos is more suitable for the associated users than the first subset of the plurality of promotional videos as defined by the promotional philosophy.

Fig 3
Fig 44

64. A television programming viewing system in which multiple types of RF bypass switches may be used in conjunction with a set-top box, and wherein television programming is provided to a number of viewers, the system comprising:

a display device for displaying the television programming;

32 a recording device for recording the television programming;

an RF bypass switch of a single type of switch from a plurality of different types of switches, wherein the RF bypass switch comprises at least one switch state and is configured to allow at least one unprocessed signal representing the television programming to be passed to at least one device from the group of devices comprising the display device and the recording device, when the RF bypass switch is in a first switch state; and

a set-top box that is configurable to operate differently for each type of RF bypass switch of the plurality of types of switches.

65. The system defined in claim 64 further comprising an interactive television program guide implemented at least in part on the set-top box.

66. The system defined in claim 64 wherein the RF bypass switch is configured to provide a processed signal to the recording device and an unprocessed signal to the display device.

67. The system defined in claim 64 wherein:
the set-top box has an on/off state; and
the RF bypass switch is further
configured to change switch states when the set-top box
changes its on/off state.

68. The system defined in claim 64 wherein:
the television programming is provided
to the set-top box via a plurality of signals
the system further comprises an input
device; and
the set-top box is further configured to
provide the user with an opportunity to select which
signal of the plurality of signals is bypassed by the
RF bypass switch.

69. The system defined in claim 64 wherein
the RF bypass switch is further configured to be
disabled according to a user selectable setting.

70. A method for use in a television
programming viewing system in which multiple types of
RF bypass switches may be used in conjunction with a

set-top box, and wherein television programming is provided to a number of viewers, the method comprising:

providing at least one unprocessed signal representing the television programming, with an RF bypass switch of a single type of switch from a plurality of different types of switches, to at least one device from the group of devices comprising the display device and the recording device; and

configuring a set-top box to operate differently for each type of RF bypass switch of the plurality of types of switches.

71. The method defined in claim 70 wherein configuring the set-top box to operate differently for each type of RF bypass switch of the plurality of types of switches comprises configuring the set-top box with an interactive television program guide to operate differently for each type of RF bypass switch of the plurality of types of switches.

72. The method defined in claim 70 wherein providing at least one unprocessed signal representing the television programming with an RF bypass switch of a single type of switch from a plurality of different types of switches, to at least one device from the group of devices comprising the display device and the recording device, comprises providing a processed signal to the recording device and an unprocessed signal to the display device with the RF bypass switch.

73. The method defined in claim 70 wherein:
the set-top box has an on/off state; and
the method further comprises switching

states of the RF bypass switch when the set-top box changes its on/off state.

74. The method defined in claim 70 further comprising:

providing the television programming to the set-top box via a plurality of signals; and

providing a user with an opportunity to select which signal of the plurality of signals is bypassed by the RF bypass switch.

75. The method defined in claim 70 further comprising disabling the RF bypass switch according to a user selectable setting.

76. A television programming viewing system in which multiple types of RF bypass switches may be used in conjunction with a set-top box, and wherein television programming is provided to a number of viewers, the system comprising:

switching means for providing at least one unprocessed signal representing the television programming to at least one device from the group of devices comprising the display device and the recording device, wherein the switching means is a single type of switching means from a plurality of different types of switching means; and

means for operating a set-top box differently for each type of switching means.

77. The system defined in claim 76 wherein configuring the set-top box to operate differently for each type of RF bypass switch of the plurality of types

of switches comprises configuring the set-top box with an interactive television program guide to operate differently for each type of switching means of the plurality of types of switches.

78. The system defined in claim 76 wherein the means for providing at least one unprocessed signal representing the television programming, with an RF bypass switch of a single type of switch from a plurality of different types of switches, to at least one device from the group of devices comprising the display device and the recording device, comprises means for providing a processed signal to the recording device and an unprocessed signal to the display device with the RF bypass switch.

79. The system defined in claim 76 wherein:
the set-top box has an on/off state; and
the system further comprises means for switching states of the RF bypass switch when the set-top box changes its on/off state.

80. The system defined in claim 76 further comprising:

means for providing the television programming to the set-top box via a plurality of signals; and

means for providing a user with an opportunity to select which signal of the plurality of signals is bypassed by the RF bypass switch.

81. The system defined in claim 76 further comprising means for disabling the RF bypass switch according to a user selectable setting.

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